on 24.vii1996 and 5.vii.1999. One is tempted to suggest that one or more of these casual specimens perhaps emanated from this relict colony only eight miles distant. The Joydens Wood wych elms which hosted a thriving colony of white-letter hairstreaks *Strymonidia w-album* Knoch into the 1950s have left no regenerating growth, the site being occupied by well-tended gardens.– B.K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Dartford, Kent DA5 2HN.

Dewick's Plusia *Macdunnoughia confusa* (Steph.) (Lep.; Noctuidae) in the "London Area"

John Muggleton's record of this migrant species at Staines on 10 October 1999 (*Ent. Rec.* **111**:260) may well be new to VC 21, but it is not the first record for the "London Area" (i.e. the London Natural History Society recording area). A specimen was taken by Colin Hart at Buckland, Surrey on 20 August 1992, a site on the extreme southern boundary of the area described above. The specimen was exhibited at the annual exhibition of the BENHS (although not until 1993 and hence too late for inclusion in Colin Plant's book *Larger Moths of the London Area*, published that same year). It is listed in Collins (1997, *Larger Moths of Surrey*).– GRAHAM A. COLLINS, 15 Hurst Way, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 7AP.

***Ennomos autumnaria* (Wern.) (Lep.: Geometridae) in north-west Kent**

A slightly worn male specimen of *E. autumnaria* visited my garden m.v. light on 2.ix.1999. I have, previously, only seen it on 23.ix.1969 and 25.ix.1972, when the species was a familiar resident of this area, and elsewhere in Kent. At that period, it was frequently seen at street lights, but appears to have been absent from the county for the past twenty-five years except for a very occasional immigrant on the coast.

With *autumnaria* long absent as a resident species in Kent, the Dartford specimen is unlikely to have originated in the county, nor in Surrey from where it is also unknown (Collins, *Larger Moths of Surrey,* 1997). However, a possible source is south-west Essex, directly opposite across the Thames, where for a number of years *autumnaria* has maintained a resident population (Plant, *Larger Moths of the London Area,* 1993).

This seems a more plausible explantation than immigration from the continent which is sporadic only.– B.K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Dartford, Kent DA5 2HN.

The Willow Ermine *Yponomeuta rorrella* (Hb.) (Lep.: Yponomeutidae) at Old Hall Marsh, Essex

On 1 May 1999, whilst searching a hedgerow for Lepidoptera larvae and weevils at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' nature reserve at Old Hall Marsh, Essex, I found a number of webs containing Yponomeutid larvae. Not being certain precisely which species was involved, I took away a few of the larvae, which pupated almost immediately. When the first moth emerged in early June I provisionally named it as *Yponomeuta rorrella* (Hb.); this was later confirmed by Brian Goodey, the Essex macro-Lepidoptera Recorder for the Essex Field Club.

This species was considered to be only an occasional vagrant or immigrant to Essex. Brian Goodey recorded the first example for the county on 3 August 1988 at Fingringhoe Wick, near Colchester. Maitland Emmet searched the area thoroughly, but found no signs of it feeding on the many willows present. It appeared again in Essex a year later, during 1989, at Saffron Walden, Fingringoe, Alresford, Donyland and Grays and then during 1990 at Daws Hall, Lamarsh and Saffron Walden again. My Old Hall Marsh specimens apparently provide the first breeding record for Essex and it is interesting to note that the larval webs were on hawthorn *Crataegus*. No willows or sallows, the expected food plants, were to be found in the vicinity of the feeding larvae.

The survey work at Old Hall Marsh forms a part of a five year project being undertaken on behalf of the RSPB by the Colchester Natural History Society.– DAVID WARNER, 13 Atlas Court, Earls Colne, Essex CO6 2LY.

BOOK REVIEWS

A catalogue of the Irish Braconidae (Hymenoptera: Ichneumonoidea) by **J. P. O'Connor, R. Nash and C van Achterberg**. 124 pp., 7 pages of line-drawings, two pages of colour plates. A5, folded and stapled, ISBN 0 9511514 3 6. Occasional publication of the Irish Biogeographical Society, number 4, 1999. £5 inclusive of postage from the Society at National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2, Ireland. An *Erratum* slip accompanies the work.

The parasitic Hymenoptera are a much maligned and very poorly studied group, yet since almost every other insect has at least one hymenopterous parasite that afflicts it they are of some considerable importance. The neglect is likely to be due almost entirely to the lack of keys for many groups and the unworkable nature of most others. The parasitic family Braconidae is one of the largest families within the entire of the Hymenoptera, with some 40,000 species worldwide and nearly 1,200 in Britain. Some 529 species are currently known from Ireland of which nineteen are listed here as new to the island.

The authors state that this work is designed to eliminate the problems that result from the present scattered nature of identification and other literature and the absence of a modern list of the species occurring in Ireland. The catalogue lists not only the names, but also the recorded localities of each species. The two Irish braconids *Trioxys cursii* (Curtis) and *Leiphron apicalis* (Haliday), illustrated by John Curtis in his *British Entomology*, are reproduced here, also in colour.

This is undoubtedly a specialist work and it will most probably interest rather few general entomologists, perhaps fewer still outside Ireland. Nevertheless, it represents a positive step towards initiating the more detailed study of these interesting insects and should be supported by serious entomologists. Most lepidopterists will, at some stage, have reared braconids unintentionally from their prized larvae and it is hoped that these generally unwelcome arrivals in the breeding cage will be preserved, along with the remains of their host, for identification by specialists. A list of people willing to name such bred examples can be obtained from the reviewer.

Colin W. Plant